

It's Our Community – Innovations in Community Led Services

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Future of Public Services

NCVO's 'Future of Public Services' series uses learning from our members to review the role of voluntary organisations in the delivery of public services. With the increasing use of new types of partnerships, contracts and payment models in public service design and delivery, how can we ensure local needs are met and the most disadvantaged not left behind? How can volunteers and voluntary organisations provide much needed engagement with local people? This series aims to tackle these questions and provides real examples of how services can be commissioned in a way that truly enables community-led delivery.

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1. Introduction

At a time when demand for public services remains high due to changing demographic trends, the focus on local delivery is a vital aspect of ensuring needs are met. There is an interest in local community ownership from policy-makers in order to ensure locally responsive approaches that deliver effectively according to real demand. But which areas are able to demonstrate fresh approaches that genuinely enable local ownership?

This is a report about innovation in service delivery, but innovation is a tricky idea for many people delivering community services, they exist on stretched resources and are more likely to want to apply those resources to tried and tested approaches. However, we have uncovered some inspiring examples of ownership by community organisations and some key illustrations of the major trends they face. In some cases there are direct assets transferred from the public sector, in other cases local communities have come together to respond to a need without any public authority support.

One key trend is the strength of local identity and buy-in within the local area. We are told that 'scaling up' and growth are important aspirations for charities and social enterprises, but through this research we have found that for our interviewees, what marks the success of their organisation is not growth, but the ability to provide a localised tailored service which is responsive to local needs. Often this means remaining small and geographically focussed.

The *It's Our Community* project has also explored how opportunities from the EU might benefit small community organisations. Typically EU Structural funds have benefitted large organisations, but as we shall see, there are emerging opportunities for providing really effective services and value for money supporting local community organisations.

In this report we present eight case studies of innovative community led services, we then go on to explore the common themes and make recommendations for policy.

2. About It's Our Community

It's Our Community started in August 2011, setting out to explore the reality of community ownership in the UK, France, Portugal and Germany. The project has identified a range of examples around how community groups in each of the countries are dealing with complex issues through community-led projects; in the first phase it drew out the learning across the different countries with a report and guidance which can be found on the website: www.itsourcommunity.eu

This year we have focussed on the experience of small community-led projects in England, and how communities come together to deliver local solutions to local issues. We have explored the support and funding needed for these kinds of grassroots projects to thrive at the local, national and European level.

We have also explored how European funding has been used to drive community-led solutions to local problems, and considered how this funding might be used in the future. To do this we need to appreciate the characteristics and specific requirements of community-led initiatives.

Aim of the programme:

To support community-led projects on the ground in the UK and elsewhere, through connecting ideas and resources at the national and European level.

Through this, and other NCVO policy work we hope to:

- Contribute to empowering communities to lead and control local services that better meet their needs, thanks to knowledge of effective models of community formation and ownership
- Address knowledge gaps and provide practical skills for development of community projects, strengthening individuals' and neighbourhood groups' capacity for change
- Contribute to improving the provision of appropriate, high quality, local services for communities across Europe.

Our definitions:

Community – individuals who have something in common (interest or locality), or come together around a common cause.

Led – Leading, for the purposes of this research, relates to the influence/ control over the service by members of that community. We were particularly interested in examples that involved the wider community in the design and delivery of the service.

Service – an asset or an activity that directly benefits members of that community.

Background

England

Nationally, recent years have seen a series of new provisions to promote community involvement in service delivery put in place. The Localism Act brought in a range of new powers to enable communities to hold local authorities to account and to offer to deliver services, for example by using the Community Right to Bid and the Right to Challenge. However use of these new instruments has been relatively limited and there are still challenges to delivery around many of these new models.

Increasingly local solutions are being suggested to intractable problems such as the ageing society, environment and unemployment. The organisations we present here have a unique local identity based very clearly on the people who are contributing to the service at that time. The core principles of local ownership and delivery are at the heart of voluntary action.

Europe

There is also an increasing level of interest for this kind of activity at the European level, with Community led services springing up across Europe responding to individual local needs and gaps in provision. Often these services will evolve out of local campaigns, from communities attempting to exert some control over their local environment.

The key European policies and programmes currently aimed at stimulating grassroots projects include:

- The Social Business Initiative which is designed to enable social entrepreneurship to flourish across Europe
- New Procurement and State Aid regulation from Brussels with a clearer recognition of social value
- Support for social investment under the EU Social Entrepreneurship Fund

And crucially

- The European Structural and Investment funds, such as the European Social Fund.

For 2014-2020, 20% of European Social Fund money in England will need to be directed towards activities that underpin the social inclusion and combating poverty thematic objective of the funds. There are opportunities for community led innovation to be supported through European Structural and Investment funding, particularly around projects that promote social inclusion.

An example of how that could be partly delivered is through ***Community Grants***, which have for the last seven years been distributed as small pots of money, delivered across England through regional grant coordinating bodies. Community Grants are up to the value of 12,000 and have a simplified application process. The recipients of the grants are civil society organisations and the main beneficiaries are people who need extra help towards becoming ready to find a job. There is a second round of grants available for a value of

£15,000 and grant co-ordinating bodies are currently being organised.

Community led innovations can also be driven through *Community Led Local Development (CLLD)* whereby stakeholders in a local area work in a collaborative partnership to increase employment and overcome disadvantage.

Why community-led organisations?

The focus of this research is on small locally-led community organisations. These are organisations that are often run on limited overheads and staff costs are minimal. Their proximity to what is happening on the ground and ability to speak clearly about local issues enables them to recruit and retain volunteers.

As values-based organisations, they tend to run on a not for profit basis structuring themselves, for example, as cooperatives, limited companies or community interest companies, or registered charities.

These organisations will often start out without pre-determined expectations of what the services will look like, they are able to be innovative because they allow the community and volunteers to put their stamp on the organisation. In some of our case studies such as **Bold Vision** and **The Mill** they act as local incubators, offering a safe place for people to try new ideas and develop new services.

Organisations tend to become a focal point for the whole community, this brings with it opportunities to try new ideas that respond to local needs in innovative ways. However there are often difficulties around the capacity to

keep up with the expectations of community members and the high profile of the organisation.

It is difficult for organisations with limited resources to be innovative, as innovation requires risk, and for many organisations, the main priority tends to be to focus their scarce resources into projects that they know will be responsive to locally identified needs. Yet, as we will see, due to the need to be imaginative and resourceful in their use of local assets, community based services are often by their nature innovative.

The research

This project involved:

- Mapping exercise of NCVO community members and other community organisations, to select exemplar case studies that were community led and innovative
- Interviews with individuals running community based projects
- Three research workshop events around the country
- Events in Paris, Brussels and Dublin exploring the European opportunities
- Community grants research: An analysis of how the European Social Fund has been used to support community led services and exploration of how future funding might be delivered, through interviews with grants managers and organisations delivering services.

Mapping exercise

We selected eight case studies from a mapping exercise of community members of NCVO and a snowball sample of non members using web research and NCVO contacts. NCVO has over 6,600 community organisations all with an income of less than £30,000 per annum with 80% of these Community members working locally.

Case studies were selected because they met the following characteristics. They:

Deal with major challenges - The examples respond to a social/economic/environmental need through a local solution.

Are innovative - Case studies were considered by the researchers to be innovative either in delivery, form or idea.

For example, responding to a problem or issue in using an innovative approach, or through a new form of organisation in relation to that particular issue area.

Are owned by the community - The case studies were community owned.

We defined this as an involvement of community members in the governance and delivery of the project and the project should engender feelings of ownership amongst the wider community.

Are able to demonstrate their successes -

Case studies should have made an impact on the community, area of concern or beneficiaries.

Interviews

We carried out semi structured interviews with representatives from the eight community projects chosen. These interviews fed into the development of the in-depth case studies listed in this report as well as the broader findings and recommendations for policy.

Research workshops

We also engaged with more than 60 people from the community and voluntary sector at our three research workshop events around the country. At these events local community organisations came together to discuss the unique value brought to services by community based organisations.

Community grants research

As part of the project we carried out research to explore the achievements of the European Social Fund – Community grants programme. We sought to identify what small community organisations funded through the community grants programme have achieved. What difference the projects have made to disadvantaged individuals and communities, and what value the regional grants bodies identified in funding small organisations to engage with the most disadvantaged. The report is available separately.

3. Case studies

Summary of our case studies

The eight case studies covered a range of different services, from community centres to gardens, to a nursery, all involving the community in delivery, but there were differing levels of involvement – from more top-down *Homebaked* delivered initially by Liverpool Biennial with the aim to transfer power to the community, to the completely user-led such as *Childspace*.

They came from a range of contexts, from urban such as the Mill to the rural service such as Marches Access Point. They ranged in their stage of development between 2 years and 12 years old, and they chose different organisational forms, such as Company Limited by Guarantee, Community Interest Company, Cooperative, Community Land Trust and Registered Charity.

However, they all survived on a comparatively low turnover, were driven primarily by volunteers, and all delivered a service that was crucial to the local community. They were all extremely locally focussed and were born out of a desire to meet a need that had previously been neglected.

In summary, our case studies were:

Bold Vision is a community project based in the telegraph hill area of Lewisham. It could be described as a local incubator of community-owned projects, it's charitable status and governance arrangements allow it to apply successfully for local assets and then, when they are ready, spin these projects out to separate

management committees, these include a community-run café, a community garden, and crucially, the local library that was at threat of closure.

Childspace is a parent run cooperative which runs a nursery for children between 14 months and three and a half, the nursery has been running since 1990 and has been handed down through families in Lambeth. The parents employ a paid nursery manager and each of the families take turns to run the nursery with her.

Didsbury Dinners engages the community (Didsbury is a suburb of Manchester) about food sustainability, and supporting the community more broadly through enhancing people's skills and confidence. It began with a low carbon community cookbook by local activist Amanda Woodvine. Amanda worked closely with the local community to source the recipes and create something that was tailored to the needs of local people and the local environment. The proceeds of the book have been used to support the creation of free learn to cook courses, and local food growing projects such as an orchard and community garden. The project engages with over a hundred volunteers working in the gardens and as community cookery champions.

Home Baked is a Community Land trust and cooperative bakery that sits in the heart of a terraced neighbourhood in Anfield, Liverpool, surrounded by houses prepped for demolition under the Housing Market Renewal initiative. The project was initiated by the Liverpool Biennial as a proposal to reactivate some of the buildings through an asset-transfer, the aim was

to take a row of empty houses and breathe new life into them. The process was user-led rather than developer-led, the two year design work engaging widely including young people and lifelong older residents. The final product is a bakery and a community land trust run by volunteers which will bring the community together to plan for other potential assets in the area. Anyone interested in the future of the local neighbourhood can become a Trust member.

The cooperative bakery is a much loved shop that serves football supporters on match days and the wider community. It now operates as a cooperative and the community continue to be in control of the project, through a very successful kickstarter campaign, volunteering in the bakery, and involvement in the Community Land trust.

Long Meadow Longmeadow is a traditional tenant and residents association operating within an estate in Wiltshire, for a very limited budget they have managed to secure positive outcomes around reductions in anti-social behaviour and fostering respect amongst local young people for their neighbourhood.

Marches Access Point (MAP) is a community and volunteer-led organisation that provides much needed IT access services in Kington in Herefordshire. The small market town has extremely poor transport links and poor broadband connection. Through MAP, residents can gain access to the internet, take a variety of adult community learning courses and use the communication facilities. MAP is a community group that represents and

champions the community of Kington and surrounding areas by offering access to a wide range of services and training. MAP's objective is to build a better, brighter and sustainable quality of life for current and future generations in Kington and the Marches.

MAP exists in a community that has a strong culture of volunteering; the town has 140 groups and organisations and activities, from arts to allotments, lunch clubs to children's clubs, sports to singing. One of the aims of MAP is to get the town networking and working together.

The Mill provides a welcoming, accessible and inclusive space at the heart of Walthamstow, which aims to create a positive environment in which to work with people to make things happen. Set up by the local neighbourhood association, the Mill exists in an old library building. The community group take an asset-based approach to all the work that goes on in the building, and aim to make the most of the hidden talents and skills in the community.

North Deal Community Partnership. North Deal is a suburban area, and it is suggested that its needs are often overlooked because it doesn't suffer as obvious deprivation as other surrounding areas, however there is a lack of services, employment and learning opportunities. A local community led partnership was set up to address these needs that statutory services were overlooking. The partnership consulted with the wider community over the course of two year period on the use of a brownfield site and development of a community centre. The

partnership is also looking to establish a community garden. The wider community continues to be heavily involved in the delivery and decision making around the partnership and the community centre.

Bold Vision

Summary

Bold Vision is a charity based in the Telegraph Hill area of Lewisham. It could be described as a local incubator of community-owned projects, its charitable status and governance arrangements allow it to apply successfully for local assets and then, when they are ready, spin these projects out to separate management committees, these include a community-run café, a community garden, and crucially, the local library that was under threat of closure.

Background

In Telegraph Hill there can be quite a divide between the poorest and the richest, with mixed housing and backgrounds, inequalities in social capital, and a lack of opportunities to connect.

Bold Vision came from a simple idea; the community of Telegraph Hill needed more spaces to come together. From 2007 a group of residents began to talk about how they could start to make things happen in the community. With some funding from the Local Area Assembly the group commissioned a community survey and found that what local people wanted was a place to gather. They developed a broad ambition to create some kind of community space. They couldn't have predicted the range of projects that would develop thanks to the good will and hard work of the community.

After becoming a registered company in 2009 the first thing Bold Vision aimed to do was to develop a community space and café. Through searching locally for the perfect under-used space they identified a location, an old cellar, and negotiated the lease for it. After a wide-reaching fundraising campaign (individual pledges as well as money from foundations) and a lot of volunteer time, the space was rebuilt and opened as the Hill Station Café in 2010. It quickly became a hub for the local community, providing a place for community workshops and entertainment as well as being a catalyst for new projects.

The fact that Bold Vision were able to pull this off so quickly, gave them a reputation for making things happen in Telegraph Hill. They were approached by people with ambitions to do other things in the community. For example, a group wanted to set up a community garden on some local authority land but because the group was not legally formed with a constitution or track record, they were struggling to convince the local authority to hand over the land to them. Bold Vision, now a registered charity, was asked to negotiate the contract and provide a structure for the group that came to be known as Common Growth to operate within.

The charity also played a vital role in saving the local library. When a group of volunteers who were prepared to take over the library found that the council wouldn't deal with them, Bold Vision were asked to become the official body behind the library. Now relaunched as New Cross Learning, the former local authority

library has grown into a community run space, wholly volunteer led, offering a library service, a book shop and a host of other learning activities.



Bold Vision's strength is in acting as a local incubator, providing support and structure to new projects. As those projects evolve they may choose to spin off into an independent organisation. Authorities feel more confident in issuing grants and contracts to an organisation with a track record, existing funding and supporters and volunteers. This arrangement makes it easier for new projects to get started. It also ensures that the new projects benefit from, for example, having a bank account, charitable status, company policies, website, database etc. For new grassroots organisations these requirements can be difficult to achieve, especially when they all their energies are directed towards running a local campaign. They also benefit from being part of a wider family of projects and there have been many examples of initiatives that have crossed over between the individual projects.

Residents involved in the decision making

The organisation originated out of a consultation with local residents, identifying people's priorities and needs.

The board of Bold Vision is made up of a diverse group of local residents, each with a different professional background, from the arts to business. Through this diversity they are able to apply different approaches to looking at local problems while remaining respectful and open minded about each other's ideas. The board take an innovative approach to project development, they steer clear from being too heavy handed or bureaucratic.

There are other ways for community members to get involved in the decision making and governance. There are three management groups for the different projects each involving around 20 people.

Residents involved in the delivery

Bold Vision ensures that there are a wide range of volunteer opportunities to suit a variety of interests, from website development, digging trenches, to running workshops.

There are approximately 1,000 hours a month volunteer time needed to keep the library running, this is delivered by a core team of regular volunteers and a bigger portfolio of people who volunteer on a less frequent basis. A growing relationship with corporate volunteers from Accenture has brought in a new skillset and broadened their outlook further.

New Cross Learning has also worked with the council to take on volunteers who are doing their community service, some of those people have gone on to take up more long term volunteer positions after they've completed their community hours.

Through their volunteering opportunities they are also providing a valuable experience for people who are cut off from the community, and a number of people have gone on to get jobs as a result of this experience, it's felt that the experience can provide gentle rehabilitation and increased confidence.

Spreading the word

Bold Vision engages more broadly with the wider community through its regular newsletters and reaches around 500 people through these emails.

What funding have they had?

Bold Vision is funded through a mix of charitable grants, individual donations (Bold Backers) and income generation.

The library has been very successful at fundraising and although during the build the café was reliant on donations it now operates as a self-sustaining business.

How do they work in partnership?

The relationship with the local authority is crucial for Bold Vision, and they have managed to move from an oppositional relationship (when campaigning against library closures) to a cooperative one; the council now believe the community library is a great model for other local authorities and they invite Bold Vision to share their expertise.

Bold Vision also partner with the RSA, as New Cross is one of their areas for their Connected Communities (link) project and they have

helped fund the artworks on the front and inside New Cross Learning.

Being London-based means that Bold Vision are able to utilise a wide range of partnerships and resources that other more rural organisations might not have access to, such as corporate volunteers.

What are the achievements to date?

They have developed an organisation which has been very successful in making things happen locally. In part this is due to the people behind Bold Vision who are committed to achieving results, and the right results for the community. They make an effort to 'stay in touch with reality' and ensuring that their projects meet the aspirations of the community at large.

What challenges have they faced?

Bold Vision is wholly volunteer-led and this can present challenges. Most people involved in the organisation have day jobs and other commitments and this can mean that they don't always have the time to respond to opportunities. This can make fundraising a challenge.

The good reputation that they have built up and their track record in developing new ventures means that they need to be selective in the projects they get involved with, to avoid spreading themselves too thinly.

Another challenge was around the balance between local campaigns to save public assets such as the library. Some of the people who had been leading the campaign against the library's closure, were the same people who ended up

eventually delivering the new service. Moving from a campaigning to a delivery position has been a challenge for everyone involved, getting people to work cooperatively with the local authority rather than remaining oppositional.

Where next?

To date Bold Vision has been responsive to local needs, there is no ambition to grow any bigger geographically because they believe it is important to have a community based approach.

They draw a lot of success from the local approach, having a strong network means they are in a position to identify synergies between people and projects, so that when developing new ideas they are able to make the right connections to get things happening. They are hoping to get involved in Locality's Our Place program to increase citizen engagement with decisions made about the local area.

They do however, feel that they have an approach that could be used as inspiration in other areas, and are happy to get out and speak to other communities.

Further information

www.boldvision.org.uk

Twitter: @boldvisionuk

Childspace

Summary

Childspace is a parent-owned and run cooperative nursery in the heart of Lambeth, London. The parents all have a role in the day-to-day running and delivery of the nursery, and it provides an affordable solution to the need for childcare.

Background

Childspace was established in 1990 by a group of families who wanted to provide affordable childcare that met their expectations and provided a nurturing environment for their children. They designed a nursery that gave the parents complete collective control over their children's care. The model has been so successful that the organisation has existed for 23 years, this is remarkable as each parent only tends to stay involved for two or three years until their children move on to school.

From small beginnings based in the homes of each family, it has grown into a community of 12 families employing a registered nursery worker and a part-time worker.

Each parent is expected to be involved in the delivery of the nursery as well as the decision making process and specific roles. Since its set-up there has been some changes in the roles taken on by parents, in the early days there were only a couple of established roles, the secretary and the book keeper, in the last three years the group have been looking at the other roles that needed to be defined to ensure they have the right management structures in place.

The nursery is housed in a shared community centre on a housing estate near a park. There's an outside garden space with a slide and a swing and trees and plants as well as an area with a canopy.

They have one paid member of staff. The current nursery manager has been there for a while and this helps to ensure continuity as families move on from involvement in the nursery. The parents learn a lot from the nursery manager in terms of how to be with the children, how to work with them and how to employ a respectful and empathic approach to childcare.

Other ways that they retain continuity is to call on parents who were involved before to get answers to questions, they also have some parents who stay on for longer when they have two or three children. Parents are committed to Childspace and those whose children have moved on from the nursery are often happy to stay in touch with new parents and provide answers to questions.

Residents involved in the decision making

All decisions are made as a cooperative, and the group meet once a month to discuss regular business, but also stay in touch on a daily basis. They also utilise a private Facebook group to communicate with each other.

Residents involved in the delivery

All parents are required to contribute an amount of time in the delivery of the nursery. Each parent has to commit to running a session at the nursery at least once every 7 weeks.

What funding have they had?

The nursery is self-financing through the nursery fees, which they try to keep to a minimum. They also do a small amount of fundraising such as organising 'mummy and baby' discos at a local bar, this is also a good way to promote childspace to new parents.

What are the achievements to date?

The parents seem to learn a lot from the nursery manager, who does ongoing training and is able to pass her learning onto the parents.

It's about respect and empathy and learning and being able to have a positive and supportive environment for everyone.

What challenges have they faced?

There are some challenges associated with sharing the premises, such as keeping up channels of communication with the other groups who use the facility. They now have a parent whose role is to be the liaison person, so they can focus on communication and the other people involved have got a key contact person.

Also, as they remain small and only involve a limited number of parents it can sometimes be difficult to demonstrate that their organisation has a wider community benefit.

Where next?

Over the years Childspace has explored the potential of expanding to include more children and families but have so far settled on remaining small so that it is a manageable service for the parents to run.

Further information

<http://www.childspace.org>

Didsbury Dinners

Summary

Didsbury Dinners is a community interest company which began with the ambition to engage the local community about food sustainability. This was delivered through the process of researching and developing a sustainable community cook book and has moved on to a variety of projects that enhance people's skills, food growing and cookery abilities.



Background

Former editor and nutritionist Amanda Woodvine began Didsbury Dinners with an ambition to research and develop a low carbon community cookbook in her local area of Didsbury in Manchester. The community cookbook was designed to introduce people to the ideas and practicalities of food sustainability.

Amanda worked with the local community to source ideas and inspiration for the content of the book, from how you can reduce energy when you're cooking, through to the wild food you can source in our local area and what you can grow yourself. Amanda also scoped the

local availability of community gardens, orchards and allotments.

On the back of the success of the community cookbook, Amanda and the local volunteers were able to invest the sales of the book into setting up things to tackle the challenges experienced by people locally. Their big initial achievements were to fund a community orchard and a pilot *Learn to Cook* course.

Learn to Cook is a free course aimed at people on low incomes which weaves in all the sustainability messages that are in the book and covers cooking skills, money saving advice and sustainable shopping such as knowing what's in season when.

Together with the growing projects (community orchards and gardens) Didsbury Dinners has several aims, to provide free fruit and veg for people on low incomes, teach people new skills in food growing or cooking, tackle food waste and raise awareness of how people can reduce their environmental impact through their food choices.

Residents involved in the decision making

Amanda leads the project and is the only person working full time on it, but there are lots of opportunities for the wider community to contribute their local knowledge and steer the project such as through contributing to the cookbook and the Learn to Cook course.

After every Learn to Cook six week course has ended, the cookery champions meet and feed back in an evaluation, discussing what worked well and what didn't. These meetings move the

group towards a joint decision about the content and style of the next course.

A core group of volunteers also get together periodically to develop a plan for the garden.

Some volunteers are also acting as community reporters, reporting on the needs of the community and promoting their research through a tumblr photo blog and a video channel.

The community at large have been involved through social media, online surveys and engaged with through large scale 'door drops' in the area.

Residents involved in the delivery

There are many ways to get involved in Didsbury Dinners as a volunteer. Either as a community garden volunteer, cookery assistant or as a cookery champion. There are:

- Over 100 volunteers who help out in the orchards and the community garden
- 12 cookery champions and assistants who work on the Learn to Cook Course
- Admin and office volunteer role

The cookery champions teaching people to cook over a six week learn to cook course, because of the big commitment the role involves they receive training and a detailed role description.

The learn to cook course and the community growing, are joined up so that the community cookery champions can have a say in what is grown in the garden and that's fed back to the

growers to grow ingredients that can be used for free in the courses.

Leadership

Strong leadership for Didsbury Dinners comes from Amanda Woodvine, the chief executive. Amanda had previously worked on national campaigns before deciding that she wanted to set something up where she was living in Didsbury. She was interested in community engagement and seeing local applicable results a community campaign. She was also interested in getting to know people in her local neighbourhood, and Didsbury Dinners proved to be a really effective way of going about this.

Despite the organisation being mainly the brain child of Amanda, she has worked with community members at every stage of the development of the project. Projects such as these require a person who is dedicated and can give up a large amount of time, but they cannot work without the full support of the community.

Spreading the word

The projects reach a wide demographic, all ages from children as young as five years old to retired people participate in the learn to cook courses. They work with a local social housing trust to promote the courses. Every six weeks or so, 24 people are trained through the learn to cook courses.

Didsbury Dinners run a Green Food Trail, a celebration of local seasonal food, this reaches a huge number of people through door dropping to every home in Didsbury, and prominent advertising, this helped to put the organisation

on the map, and to get people talking about them.

What funding have they had?

The project has mainly survived on small one off pots of funding, a cash grant from the local authority covered the cost of publishing the cookbook, and the cost of teacher training and food hygiene.

They also receive revenue from the sale of the cookbook.

They have also received in kind support such as land for growing on from the local estate agent.

How do they work in partnership?

The partnership with the local city council is really important for getting the relevant permissions for planting in the local park.

Keen not to replicate and undermine existing good work happening locally, Didsbury Dinners worked in partnership with the other local groups, such as the Didsbury Civic society, and the Didsbury traders organisation. Getting to know these groups has helped build a picture of existing provision locally, and provided an opportunity for consultation on their own plans. It has resulted in new opportunities for the organisation, for example being offered the catering for Didsbury arts festival.

Local partnerships have also provided resources for Didsbury Dinners such as the use of a Surestart centre and two community centres as venues for the learn to cook courses, holding the courses here is also good for promoting the courses to people who use the centres.

They are also working with the local learning disabilities charity to create a community food garden on the site of their community house, and engaging with a care home to get the residents involved in food growing.

What are the achievements to date?

The biggest achievement has been to successfully enable people to change their attitude and behaviour around food, and addressing locally identified needs. People have reported eating more fruit and veg, and increased confidence with cooking at home. Those who get involved with Didsbury Dinners' projects also report that they enjoy the social element; getting to know other people and finding out about other community initiatives. There has even been an increase in the number of people starting to grow food at home, on windowsills and back yards.

The projects are also well known not just by people actively involved, in a short time Didsbury Dinners has managed to build a well-known brand within Didsbury and further into Manchester, it is now seen as one of the leading organisations focussed on sustainability in the area.

What challenges have they faced?

The organisation represents a lot of work for the two directors, both of whom have day jobs. Initially Amanda was working on her own on the project, so that challenge was to get the infrastructure of the organisation in place. Amanda knew that she couldn't grow the organisation by herself, so she is constantly

looking at ways to expand her team of volunteers for the most vital roles.

The directors have found that with the day to day running of the project, it can be difficult for them to think long term about sustainable funding.

Getting the right kind of support is also a challenge, they have found that they often get offers from local businesses to come along and help with a big digging project, but what they really need is support for the day to day running of the organisation such as dealing with emails and fundraising.

Where next?

Although the work started off in Didsbury, it has quickly taken off in surrounding neighbourhoods such as Burnage and Altrincham and neighbouring boroughs.

They are also looking to see if the model that they have developed through Didsbury Dinners is replicable in other areas, and are looking into whether it can be franchised in other towns with a sustainability movement such as Bristol.

They are also looking to expand the organisation within the surrounding suburbs through their green food trail, working in partnership with local businesses such as an organic grocery and a garden centre.

Further information

<http://www.didsburydinners.com>

Twitter: [@DidsburyDinners](https://twitter.com/DidsburyDinners)

Email: info@eatgreen.co.uk

Homebaked

Summary

Homebaked works to revitalise a cherished community asset in Liverpool and to develop further buildings for affordable housing. The project was commissioned by Liverpool Biennial in 2008 and drew on the involvement of residents and a community design process. The project now encompasses a viable cooperative bakery and has established a Community Land Trust. Community Land Trusts allow communities to provide affordable housing to meet the needs of their local area.

Background

Anfield is a world famous part of Liverpool renowned for its football stadium. Despite the area's high profile and heritage, it has had its fair share of difficulties, such as high unemployment and streets left desolate through Housing Market Renewal (HMR), a government initiative designed to stimulate the housing market through the purchase and demolition of streets of houses where there was deemed to be 'market failure'.

In 2008 Liverpool Biennial received Arts Council funding to employ a public art expert to work in areas of HMR in Liverpool. The Biennial runs an on-going programme of commissions and residencies in and around Liverpool, working on long term and often large scale public arts projects. The work is undertaken in collaboration with the residents in and around the site.

Dutch artist Jeanne van Heeswijk was invited to come and explore the area. Jeanne has a twenty year track record of doing transformative projects in areas of regeneration around the world. She was struck by the poverty she saw around the football club and the devastation of the HMR process, there were so many rows of terraced housing boarded up while waiting to be regenerated. The Biennial and Jeanne identified the potential to activate the neighbourhood and find ways of opening up opportunities for residents to have a role to play in the future of their own community.

The team began with a proposal to take a row of empty houses that had an uncertain future and for residents to come up with proposals for how to reactivate those buildings. Although the project was commissioned and led by Liverpool Biennial, the community at large drove the direction of the work and for all involved it was crucial that the design process would be community-led rather than developer-led.

About half way through the design process they became aware that the local bakery was to close. The owners couldn't sell it because there was a clearance order on it. The bakery was purpose built around a hundred years ago and since then it has only been in the hands of two families. By this time the owners were in old age and unable to keep running it. So the group decided to rent it from them, and at that point the design process focussed on that. The bakery would be run as a cooperative, with local volunteers taking a lead role in the delivery.

Homebaked Community Land Trust was established in April 2012 to provide affordable

homes in Anfield through the retrofit of the bakery and adjacent properties. The intention is that Community Land Trust will buy the bakery premises and get an asset transfer for the council owned properties next door in order to retro-fit the property for accommodation. They will then lease the bakery, shop and kitchen to Homebaked cooperative to run as a community cooperative on a lease from the CLT.

Residents involved in the decision making

So far, up to 60 residents have been involved in the Land Trust. The project has worked with community members young and old, in particular, young people from local schools were involved in the design process, and a group of committed adults have been involved in setting up the Community Land Trust.

Residents have been engaged in lots of different ways, depending on their interests. Design workshops with young people were held involving Q&A sessions between the designers and young people. The group also experimented with different techniques such as modelling and collage for young people to express their design ideas. Over two years they went right through the design and build process with an architect to come up with ideas and alternative solutions for retro-fitting those houses rather than demolishing them. The results were 'reasonable and achievable but still imaginative'.

Residents involved in the delivery

When the bakery opened it served as the shop window for the project, and the organisers

began to get a much wider range of residents involved. Regular discussions were held for residents to talk about the possibilities for the bakery and other properties and to address questions to representatives of local agencies.

It became clear that there was a growing number of people who wanted to keep the bakery and keep it running for their community. Collectively, they agreed that they wanted to do that on a cooperative basis rather than simply find private ownership.

Exchanges between the residents and invited 'experts' were crucial in the first year. These discussions led the group to a position where they would be confident to run such a business. At the same time there was a process of training and upskilling community members to work in the bakery, which includes training young people to bake. A local community college supported this process and allowed some of the members to do baking taster sessions, and if they were capable and interested, to attend courses. Homebaked now has two young people who are proficient bread and cake bakers as well as other community members who have volunteered to share their bread baking and pie baking skills.



Spreading the word

The group wanted to showcase what they were doing as part of the Liverpool Biennial 2012. It was felt that it was not enough simply to invite people to the bakery. The presentation needed to incorporate the complex back story and involvement of the community.

They decided to present their story dramatised as a tourist tour to run for the duration of the Biennial. Jeanne found a local novelist to work with the residents to write a script, they cast local actors, and the Anfield home tour was created. The mini bus tour ran twice a week taking tourists around Anfield and the site of the bakery, making stops at locations to listen to residents telling their own personal stories, in situ, sometimes from their own houses.

The group felt this to be an incredibly galvanising experience; it got them to a position of being able to articulate very clearly their own experience in a way that was moving and powerful for the audience. It took them to another level and consolidated their collective will to make something happen.

The tour was acclaimed as a great success that struck a chord with the public; it also gave Homebaked some valuable press coverage, the project was covered in the Observer and the New York Times.

What funding have they had?

Funding for the initiation of the project and development stages came largely from charitable grants. Including Esmee Fairbairn, a Dutch body supporting Dutch artists, and the

Grenada Foundation, Funding was also received from an American philanthropist to do some of the bakery fit out.

Homebaked cooperative and the CLT have now started their own fundraising, beginning with a Kickstarter crowd funding initiative to buy a commercial oven. The campaign was a great success and they far exceeded their target, enabling them to buy an oven and also to pay for some of the installation.

How do they work in partnership?

Support and pro bono advice from the Community Land Trust Network and Cooperatives UK.

What are the achievements to date?

The main achievement has been the turnaround of the attitude of the residents involved in the project. Increasing numbers of people are getting involved with homebaked and the membership of the CLT is growing weekly.

Not only have people been very keen to be involved, but as a group they have developed increased capacity to manage the land trust and the cooperative bakery.

What challenges have they faced?

One challenge has been to maintain the trust of the community throughout the process, particularly with an outside artist coming into their neighbourhood. The organisers also have to have faith in the community members themselves to take responsibility for the project.

Another challenge has been remaining flexible. The project depends on a series of

interconnected milestones, and the team have had to build flexibility into their approach.

"I think it's a time thing. I think the overall challenge is that these things take an enormous amount of time. Time is elastic: it feels like there is a real urgency in the area but these things, particularly building skills and capacity takes time, that's all it takes actually. So tenacity above all I think, and stamina."

Where next?

The plan is that the Liverpool Biennial staff will take a step back by the end of 2013, so that eventually the Biennial will become just one of the many stakeholders in the CLT.

Further information

www.2up2down.org.uk

Longmeadow TARA

Summary

Longmeadow is a traditional tenant and residents' association operating within the Longfield estate in Wiltshire, for a very limited budget they have managed to secure very positive outcomes around reductions in anti-social behaviour and fostering respect amongst local young people for their neighbourhood.

Background

Longfield is a housing estate that has existed on the site for the last 40 years, there is currently a mix of privately owned and social housing, with properties owned by a number of different housing associations. Longfield is an area of high deprivation and had recorded high levels of antisocial behaviour.

Longmeadow Tenant and Residents' Association (TARA) is a constituted voluntary group that has been running since September 2006, it started with activities for two hours on a Saturday morning, and now they run clubs for young people up to four times a week. The activities take place in a community centre on the estate that's owned by the town council. They reach up to 200 local residents a week through their youth and community activities.

Longmeadow TARA set out to have a proactive approach, not only do they put on events for the community but they also work in partnership with the housing associations and the town council and police to try to make improvements in the local area.

Their aims are to bring housing, police the tenants together to make the community a better and safer place to be for tenants, residents and families. They achieve this primarily through getting young people involved. Examples of activities include organising litter picks and rewarding those who take part through providing discos and barbeques. Other activities include coffee mornings, computer courses and a holiday club during the school holidays.

The organisers are able to say that thanks to the activities of the TARA, antisocial behaviour in Longmeadow is down by 60 per cent. Their method is to work with the young people to instil a sense of ownership and pride over their local area, and to get them thinking about their future aspirations.

You try and show them that there's more out there, it's not just Trowbridge it's not just this estate.

The organisers feel that a lot of what they do is plugging the gap left behind by local cuts in youth services, they have also been successful in getting local agencies to talk to each other around issues to do with Longmeadow.



Residents involved in the decision making

The TARA hold a monthly meeting for local people with an agenda, anyone can put any questions forward and they can put it to representatives from the Police or Housing, if there are a few options on the table they'll take a vote.

They engage more broadly with all residents through a monthly newsletter that goes to every house on the estate.

A big part of Longmeadow TARA does is to provide a resident perspective in all local decision making, they work with housing associations, the town council and the police to try to make improvements in the area, such as finding the right locations for community facilities such as bus shelters and dropped curbs. They work with the council to let them know where there are issues to be dealt with.

Residents involved in the delivery

Longmeadow TARA thrives because of a core group of volunteers, there are no paid staff.

people aren't going to pay to have these services, so if you don't get the volunteers that's where most groups fall.

They have a core group of about 20 volunteers who help with the clubs, coffee mornings, children's clubs and all the work they do within the community. They have some people coming in from outside the immediate area who have links to the estate or who have lived there previously.

They also have young people from outside the estate using their youth facilities, because they're offering a unique service for young people in the town.

Getting people involved in helping out and volunteering can be challenging for them, because they have no budget to pay their expenses. The fact that people do still volunteer is testament to the commitment of the community.

What funding have they had

The group needs just 7000 a year to survive, but raising the money can be a challenge for this volunteer-led organisation. Half of their money is raised through small local grants, the other half is raised through their own fundraising events such as table top sales, bingo and discos. They also do a monthly draw, going door to door on the estate and selling tickets for the 50/50 draw, this raises over 100 pound every month to the winner and the club.

How do they work in partnership?

Longmeadow TARA work in partnership with housing, police and the councils, they provide a voice for the local community to feed into local decision making.

They act as a middle-man between the community and the police, if people don't want to get involved with the police directly they can pass information on to the TARA and they'll liaise with the police.

As a TARA they also work with all the other TARAs in the town, coming together on a bi

monthly basis, through the Trowbridge Neighbourhood partnership.

The organisers have found that while these partnerships have been easy to formulate, getting the different agencies to talk to each other has been the challenge. In the past they held separate meetings, but now they are able to bring all partners into the same room.

What are the achievements to date?

The TARA are able to demonstrate there has been a reduction in anti-social behaviour in the area of over 60% since they started. They have been very successful in bringing the young people into events and fostering a sense of pride in the local area.

We try and tell them, they have the control over what happens in their lives and how it improves, if they want to trash the area, then they are the ones who will suffer the consequences.

What challenges have they faced?

The biggest challenge has been finding the funding to keep things going, they found that when they first started up there was a lot more support, but now they're established and the anti-social behaviour has dropped below a certain level, they're finding it less easy to get the help they need.

But we try to explain that if this stops, it's going to get worse. That 7,000 makes such a difference to kids and adults on the street.

Where next?

They are working to get the community centre back into community ownership. It was previously taken back into the ownership of the town council after it had been mismanaged by their predecessors.

Longmeadow TARA are working with the council to build confidence again in the community's ability to run the local asset. The council want assurances on things such as budgeting and increased numbers of volunteers.

If the facility could be placed back in the hands of the group, this would solve some of their money worries, as they could raise a small income from the hiring of the facility.

Further information

<http://longmeadowtara.btck.co.uk>

Email: longmeadowtara@aol.co.uk

Marches Access Point

Summary

Marches Access Point (MAP) is a Community Interest Company that represents and champions the community of Kington and surrounding areas by offering access to a wide range of services and training. MAP's Objective is to build a better, brighter and sustainable quality of life for current and future generations in Kington and the Marches.

Background

Kington is a small rural market town in Herefordshire which houses a high percentage of older people and the majority of the population live on low incomes. The town suffers from poor transport and communication links with no train station and no nearby access to a motorway, broadband access is also poor in the area.

Marches Access Point provides a much needed facility, an online centre full of computers. People can come in and use the computers and access the internet, the centre works like an internet café without a time limit. The centre also runs computer training courses and other

adult community learning courses.



The centre has existed on that site since 1993 when an innovative project involving BT and Apple computers established a telecentre in Kington providing tele-communication and internet to the community, the company was called Kington connected community limited (KC3). When the company went under in 2007, the staff managed to get the keys to the council-owned property, establish a new company and open up as Marches Access Point the very next week. MAP aimed to change the service, to be more community driven and less exclusive than the former company had been and reach a more diverse population.

They knew that they were the only provision locally for people to gain computer skills and other training and use the facilities. With older people increasingly encouraged to use the internet for tasks such as getting their benefits, MAP provides a vital support for people who are intimidated by the technology. Other training such as the Driving Theory test and Basic Skills English are also run from the centre, and MAP pride themselves in treating each person holistically, empathising with their situation and encouraging them to take on other courses that they might benefit from.

They also offer other resources for community groups such as use of a photocopier, printing facilities, producing business plans and helping with spreadsheets. The community in Kington is very active with around 80 community groups based in the Kington area. Through the support services it offers, MAP is able to act as a connector for the varied community organisations operating in the area.

Residents involved in the decision making

The town are producing a local action plan understanding what the community want in the local area, MAP have been active in contributing to this.

The centre doesn't really have formal channels to shape the resource, but the staff and volunteers maintain a focus on what the community need and ask them for.

Residents involved in the delivery

The organisation is predominately volunteer-led, with about 18 people volunteering regularly at the centre, MAP also has three members of paid staff.

What funding have they had?

The organisation receives funding from the skills funding agency, adult community learning for delivery of the courses and payment for tutors. They get paid per learner enrolled on the course.

The centre is also income generating through computer hire, printing and photocopying, their equipment is also available to hire, and people can also hire their training room.

How do they work in partnership?

The chief executive of MAP spends a lot of time with community groups, with the town council and with the people in the community to explore what funding they might pursue that would benefit the community.

MAP also produces a database of all the groups, organisations and businesses within Kington, they position themselves as a link between the multitude of community organisations operating in the area.

They work very closely with Herefordshire council, and Herefordshire voluntary action.

They are also partnering with an organisation in Czech Republic, on an EU funded exchange programme exploring projects that support the over 50s.

What are the achievements to date?

Main success of MAP has been helping people to realise and achieve their aims, and understanding the progression of these aims over time. They achieve this on an extremely tight budget.

As a small volunteer-led values-based organisation they believe they are also able to offer added extra to the people who come through their doors. They have examples where people have gone in to take their driving theory test, after gentle encouragement from the volunteers they've gone away with their driving theory certificate, and English level two on top. These people have gone on to find jobs.

They've successfully delivered European Social Fund funded projects and have been praised for their model of delivery and evidence gathering.

What challenges have they faced?

The main challenge is the lack of money and resource, it can be difficult to manage the expectations of the community who often have the impression that they are a council funded project. This can make the work difficult particularly in an area of high deprivation.

Relationships with the prime employment services providers can also be difficult, with referrals ending up with MAP but with no funding attached to them.

Another challenge has been to get the volunteers involved in the decision making, without over-burdening them.

Where next?

There are no ambitions for MAP to scale beyond the local area, the organisation is very much rooted in Kington, the future vision is to continue to improve the quality of the services on offer and develop new initiatives.

Further information

<http://www.map-kington.co.uk>

The Mill

Summary

A neighbourhood resource that was established through seed funding from NESTA. The Mill is a community owned space housed in a disused library in a diverse area of Walthamstow. The organisation acts as an incubator for community ideas and projects, hosts events, workshops and classes, and also provides an office space facility for local social enterprises.

Background

The aim of The Mill is to reduce isolation and build social capital in Walthamstow; they reach a mixed and diverse community including young families, older people and across different cultural communities. The Mill is focussed on working with people who live ten minutes' walk from the building. They host an Asian Women's support group and an Asian Men's group, a lot of young migrants who are new to London and are looking to find out more about their local community also use the facility.

The Mill started in 2011 after a group campaigning to reopen a library building discovered an opportunity in the form of the NESTA Neighbourhood Challenge programme. The Mill had an unusual start as it received a lot of support and a small amount of catalyst finance in the first year to establish itself. The project was one of the NESTA neighbourhood challenge projects. (For the Neighbourhood challenge NESTA partnered with the Big Lottery to provide seed funding and support to 17 neighbourhood groups across the country.) Successful groups received a year's worth of

funding and tools to support the development of local projects.

The Library Campaigners partnered with the Blackhorse action group, a residents' association, because they were constituted and had a bank account they were able to apply for the NESTA funding at a point when the library campaign didn't have its own bank account or constitution.

The terms of the NESTA funding meant that the group were tied into strict milestones, such as getting a bank account within the first month and a constitution within two months, but this meant that they were able to assert ownership of the project quickly. In the first year the organisation was focussed on developing the building (an old library), negotiating the rent with the council, and developing the initial community projects.

Their strategy for shaping the Mill was to reach out to the immediate neighbourhood, they developed a seed-funding competition and provided support for new groups to become established.

A lot of the groups that were seed funded are still going and are very successful, such as the Asian Women's Support group. Other groups have outgrown The Mill and have spun out into independent groups, such as the 'Recycled Teens' older people's group. They see this as a success story – they have been able to incubate viable community projects and those projects have become independent.

The Mill has expanded its focus to work not just within the immediate neighbourhood surroundings; they now attract people from all around the Walthamstow area. However, everything that happens in the building has to be of benefit to local people.

Residents involved in the decision making

Community members participate in the board of trustees and on the management team and those people are heavily involved in the governance and delivery of the Mill.

In terms of opportunities for the wider community to get involved, the organisers are always thinking about ways to reach out to the community. In the initial stages of the Mill they ran a big 'skills audit' asking the local people what they would want to do at the Mill, what they would want to attend and what they would want to lead. They've kept this up, and to this day anyone who has an idea for how to make something happen within the community can come and see them and they'll help them do it.

They are also developing some participatory budgeting exercises to enable people to have a say over how they spend small pots of money.

Where possible, they aim to keep the involvement informal and avoid big consultations so it is easy for people to get involved.

Residents involved in the delivery

The Mill has three part time members of paid staff, a centre manager, an administrator, and a volunteer coordinator.

There are six trustees and a larger group of key volunteers who do big projects at the Mill. The chief executive is currently an unpaid full-time role. They have about 60 regular volunteers who run everything from communications, to reception to repairs.

They also have a bank of volunteers who they call upon for specific tasks such as cake baking or helping at events. They get some professional support on a volunteer basis with tasks such as social impact measurement and structural engineering.

What funding have they had?

Catalyst funding from NESTA enabled them to establish.

Now the Mill's main income generation is through the hire of rooms and facilities, they have opened up an office space on the first floor which provide affordable accommodation for local social businesses.

They have also developed a consultancy service after requests from the Local Authority to advise them on setting up similar initiatives. The consultancy work has allowed them to spread the Mill model to other locations within the borough, bringing in new partnerships as well as a vital source of income.

How do they work in partnership?

Their most important formal partnership is with the local authority, this hasn't always been easy, they began with a more oppositional relationship when the activists were campaigning to save the local library. However, since the Mill has been established they've

worked hard to build bridges, particularly through building a relationship with an emerging department called 'Residents First' which deals with engagement and commissioning. Now the local authority actually runs services from the building and commissions the Mill to work on specific projects for them, the authority also helps with capital costs such as the heating; they were also able to renegotiate the rent and terms of the building.

The Mill has a vital network of local organisations that they collaborate with on an informal basis, such as an environmental organisation called the Hornbeam Centre who run cycling and food growing workshops and an organisation called Significant Seams, who work with low income families teaching them sewing for the purpose of generating social capital and skills sharing.

What are the achievements to date?

The Mill has managed to engage with so many people in their local community from a variety of backgrounds, in a relatively short space of time. They've enabled groups and individuals to progress from a vague idea around what they would like to see available in the community, through to the fruition of a viable community project. They have managed to stay agile and flexible when presented with ideas and suggestions from the community.

The Mill are particularly proud of their older people's group Recycled Teens and the Asian Women's support group that have gone from strength to strength. Another successful group

is the knitting group, which has a diverse demographic of participants, the youngest member is 8, the oldest in her nineties, they have men and women and many different nationalities.

They've received a lot of local recognition for the work they are doing, with people and groups phoning them up to ask for advice.

What challenges have they faced?

It has been a challenge to reach out to more isolated communities, and in some cases there is a lack of socialising between the different cultural groups that have set up in the Mill. But they decided early on that they weren't going to get different cultural groups talking to each other overnight, and some of the groups have benefitted simply from increasing their social capital within their own cultural community.

Where next?

After a period of growing very quickly, and developing ideas and projects, the team have now entered a consolidation phase. They are working on their policies and procedures, and consolidating their achievements so far. They are now moving towards executing a strategy for the long term future of the Mill.

They have developed a vision and a mission statement, and identified five areas of impact, such as deepening local connections between people and enabling people to support each other.

They also want to continue to diversify their income, and spread the message about the Mill.

Further information

<http://themill-coppermill.org>

North Deal Community Partnership

Summary

North Deal Community centre is a company limited by guarantee that has been operating since 2011. The centre was set up by the North Deal Community Partnership (NDCP), the aims of which are to reduce deprivation in the North Deal area, and provide resources for regeneration.

The aim of North Deal Community Partnership is to:

... create, establish and run a sustainable community building located in North Deal, that will provide space within which services, activities, organisations and community facilities are provided. These will be accessible to all.

Background

North Deal is a residential ward in Deal, Kent. It is slightly isolated and remote with sea on one side and a golf course on the other. The area suffers from a lack of green space for its population density.

The area is historically a coal mining area, and many of the people who left the mines when they closed never found other work. There are pockets of deprivation in the area, and it also has a high percentage of older people, and people with long term conditions. Overall the housing is mixed, with some affluent period housing, so the deprivation statistics are distorted by this and partly for that reason it hasn't been a high priority area for the authorities.

The North Deal Community Partnership grew out of two groups, the Golf Road Community Company and the North End Working Party, who were both looking at developing community spaces in the North Deal area. When the group merged in 2006 they began focussing on a disused site that the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), the District Council and English Partnerships were looking at, with a view to purchase the site from the local owners. Eventually the local owners decided that they would like to do the development themselves. So with a grant from SEEDA, they were able to unlock the site. Since then, for the last four years there has been a two- way partnership between NDCP and the private sector developers. This partnership has been effective in establishing a community centre.

NDCP spent around five years asking local people what they wanted from a community centre, this consultation put the organisation in a position to work well with the developers, armed with a good idea about what was wanted. They were fortunate to be working with very flexible developers who worked with the community groups and created the centre to their specifications and tailored to local people's needs.

Residents involved in the decision making

The design of the centre was the result of the NDCPs thorough engagement with the wider community, five years ago the community were consulted and the management developed a centre based on what they said they wanted. The management realise it is now time to listen

again and see what the priorities are for the next 5-10 years.

The board of the North Deal Community Partnership is the main decision maker, made up of local people and representation from Deal town council. Anyone from the community who is interested has an equal chance of getting elected or co-opted to the board.

The centre is also host to a community organiser, who, although independent of the NDCP, will be engaging with the community about local issues.

Residents involved in the delivery

A team of around 25 volunteers run the community centre day-to-day; there is a mix of roles from working on reception to general duties as well as more ad-hoc roles such as moving furniture and assisting in the garden.

In the first year the centre was run entirely by volunteers, in the second year they were able to recruit for a part time centre manager.

The organisers have found that since the community centre has been open they've had a lot more people interested in helping, with most people keen to get involved now the centre is up and running, as opposed to sitting on committees in the preliminary phase.

What funding have they had?

NDCP have received some small grants from local councillors as well as some help from the Community Liaison officer at Kent County Council.

They are able to generate income through their room hire service, and they also run fundraising activities such as Christmas fairs and raffles

How do they work in partnership?

They are building local partnerships such as with the local age concern organisation, carers support and their local pharmacist.

Engagement with strategic bodies has been challenging in terms of reaching the right people within the authority and being recognised as a priority area, so they have tended to keep the partnerships at a neighbourhood level.

They have worked with their local CVS on developing a funding proposal and they have also received support from national organisations such as Locality, which has been very useful for providing support to the chief executive.

What are the achievements to date?

The community partnership have been successful in creating a valued local resource, a community centre that is considered by those that use it to be very welcoming and friendly. The space provides a really good service for people who can't otherwise use the community facilities in the centre of town.

What challenges have they faced?

Currently the centre is used primarily by people aged over 50 and the partnership is keen to reach out to other demographics. The service they do provide for older people is much loved however, they have a community café that does

very well priced lunches, and the organisers believe that this is partly responsible for the over representation of older people.

Partnership working with the local authority and other strategic bodies has always been a challenge and the organisers believe that there is a lack of investment for their projects over other areas of the city. However, this has meant that they are able to remain autonomous.

The big challenge will be for the centre and the partnership to be financially self-sustaining in

the future, and to get to the position where a small surplus from the centre could cover the cost of looking after the park. The community park will not be an asset that draws in any income so they need to have to have sufficient income from other sources to make that park viable.

Further information

<http://www.northdealcommunity.co.uk>

Findings and recommendations

1. Local context & identity

The case studies selected are all diverse in terms of service area, size, income and location.

Bringing people together in areas that face challenges

They all serve communities that the organisers consider to face challenges:

Culturally,

We have around the area of Telegraph Hill a big divide between rich and poor, and cultural capital. Finding ways that the two communities can work together, be less suspicious of each other is important, the library works very well for that, because everyone feels like they can go in the library.

Socially,

We have a lot of young migrants volunteering for us who are new in London who are looking to find out about their new community, especially because they are often looking for work and they need work experience.

Or geographically,

Kington is a market town, one of the five market towns in Herefordshire, it has extremely poor transport links, no train station, it's an hour and a half to a motorway, it attracts quite a high percentage of retirees, house prices are a lot less in this area because of its poor transport links.

The organisations are local and value based

These organisations deliver impressive results on little overheads, and they remain staunchly local (seven of our case studies had no ambitions to grow geographically). They know that their true value and unique contribution lies in their local presence and local intelligence. They are able to connect ideas with people and support local informal networks for example *Marches Access Point* which almost acts like a local CVS, bringing together a database of the local community groups and projects operating in Kington. This work goes over and above their core reason remit of providing IT and Communications services to a remote community.

They support local informal networks with home-grown solutions

Like *Marches Access Point* these organisations have all developed organically. Often their mission is pre-determined, but how they get there, and what services they will provide is dependent on their ongoing

interactions and conversations with the local community, and trial and error. It is also dependent on the dormant assets and skills of the community members.

Our official charitable objective is generic 'improving community in Telegraph Hill and surrounding areas'; we deliberately kept that open so we wouldn't be restricted. We have values that we check everything against.

In bringing people together they support local informal networks, and are able to connect the needs of the community with latent assets that are present.

Recommendations

The reality of local identity is based on long-term trusted relationships and it is therefore unlikely that this can be transferred easily to another location.

We recommend that local authorities should enhance the diversity of provision and encourage a wide pool of local talent to deliver specialised services.

This can be done by:

- Enabling assets to be transferred in small contracts, for example individual community centres
- Developing good relationships with local organisations as a basis for co-designing services
- Supporting consortia to reduce the financial burden on small organisations by pooling local resources, including core office space and administration

2. Assets

Community and voluntary organisations play a unique role in the design and delivery of local services. They are often already endowed with the assets and good will of the local community which adds extra value to the service, with service users often involved in the development and delivery of the services.

The projects are often the result of a local campaign

Assets are either physical entities or non-physical qualities of the community, such as people or local traditions. These assets may already be present, and make up the building blocks on which the project is based, or they might not yet exist and their absence is what drives the group to develop their initiative. In other cases, the assets are under threat and the community organisation steps in to save them.

They act as a local incubator

Many of the projects highlighted in this report are able to bring together diverse skills and expertise to develop a basis for wider projects. They are therefore able to build on a core project and establish themselves as a focal point for wider changes in the community.

The community right to bid was exercised in the case of New Cross Library, which was one of five libraries in Lewisham that was identified for closure. It was saved by a group of activists who undertook a trial of running the service in partnership and with support from Bold Vision. The volunteers delivering New Cross Learning were supported by the Bold Vision charity. In this case they were able to develop a service that was markedly different from the original library, and played to the strengths of being a community enterprise. They have adapted the space to enable a wide range of local groups to meet and develop their own initiatives.

They build 'people' assets

The skills and determination of the people within the community, for our case studies, are the true assets of their community led services. These organisations will come about because of a match between a need and the latent skills existing within the community. In our case studies, often the services are the result of a community campaign and a desire to take control over a situation. The services often start with more unsettled beginnings such as the fight to save a local resource.

Our interviewees expressed the challenge of moving from a campaigning organisation, to a delivery organisation, where activists find themselves delivering a service that they had originally campaigned to be kept within the public sector.

We're a bit wary of becoming a replacement local authority. That was a big challenge on the library, do we take this on or not, aren't we kind of pandering to the public sector cuts? In the end we decided that it wasn't fair for the community to suffer as a result of that and that outweighed the politics.

We've had to manage the narrative of who we were, because the campaign was obviously, it was very oppositional, every Saturday we were standing outside with placards, then suddenly we were in charge of a building and we were on the inside. And now people would come to us as if we could solve things, we'd have people ask us 'why haven't our bins been collected'. We had to educate people that, just because we're inside now, it doesn't mean that we have a lot of money; doesn't mean that we're the council; and it doesn't mean that we've changed, we're still the people who were involved in the campaign

Building and managing expectations of the public

Many of the cases we have explored are able to build on the strength of a core group of individuals who are committed to develop a new approach and establish a wider campaign to reach other members of their community.

However, in many ways the communities that we have highlighted are fortunate in that they firstly have the capability to mobilise a campaign to save a threatened asset or to push for something that is currently missing locally; and secondly, that they have the ability to move from campaigning to the delivery of a service if needed.

There is a very real danger that innovations in community led local services will not happen in more deprived areas where individuals are less likely to take part in civic engagement and formal volunteering¹. Innovations in community led service delivery require risks, and they therefore require the time and commitment of highly skilled and mobilised local people to shoulder the burden of that risk.

Recommendations

It is crucial to recognise the value of local incubators in testing new approaches and connecting the needs of the community with home grown solutions.

We recommend:

- Small scale seed funding to test new approaches, this enables organisations to innovate and allows space to fail
- Transfer of assets in a supportive environment with ongoing business development support, including locally tailored advice and support from experts, such as building on the *Our Place* project
- Support for campaigners and motivated community members to develop the skills they need for delivery and leadership, such as through the establishment of local partnership networks for mentoring

¹ <http://www.itsourcommunity.eu/documents/Its-Our-Community-Report-English.pdf>

3. Governance & model of organisation

Governance through a board

Getting the governance right is vital for a small organisation for developing a clear strategy and ensuring that the organisation is clear in the direction it takes, and that decisions are justified. Some of our organisations had a formal board, others had a less formal arrangement.

For me personally I get a lot of support from other volunteers who are involved very deeply, and support from other people locally who are involved in the same way with their own projects.

The most intensive way to be involved in most of the case studies was to sit on the board or a management group, working group, or committee, and all of our case studies had these opportunities available.

Getting a diverse range of perspectives within this group was seen as crucial to enable creativity and to ensure that decisions are properly scrutinised

The board is quite a diverse group, and because we all come from different walks of life, there's an architect an artist and more business backgrounds, this means we have different ways of looking at problems, between us we're quite respectful and open minded about each other's ideas so that makes it easier for us to be innovative about the way we do things.

Where the organisation had gaps and skills shortages at this level, it's seen as pretty serious

We've got a huge gap in finance expertise. It's really difficult to find anyone who will be your volunteer treasurer, I think it must be quite a demanding job and it's really hard to get anyone to take the finance on, so we have a gap there, which we haven't been able to solve, it's been solved at the moment by someone doubling up but it shouldn't been.

Informal involvement

Some of the case studies applied less formal ways of incorporating the ideas and suggestions of the wider community, smaller organisations rooted in the community tend to involve residents more naturally and apply a less structured and light touch approach.

We do consult, and we've also got a permanent invitation to tell us what you think in our community centre. So there's always the opportunity for someone to just step inside and say I don't like what you're doing here, or we think you should do more of that.

Building participation and involvement of a wider community group

Our examples tended to have opportunities for more ad hoc involvement in decisions for a wider group of people, they provided a variety of routes to involvement and information provision in the form of newsletters was crucial for getting participation of the wider community and helping people to feel included.

We have about 500 people on the mailing list, we email newsletters once a month and a quarterly piece.

Contributing to local decision making

Some of the examples such as Marches Access Point and Bold Vision also engage people with other local decision makers, for example, the local authority. Marches Access Point is currently linked with the development of a Local Action Plan with the Town Council, and is able to incorporate the views of its users into the action planning.

The organisational form will vary

When securing the future of local assets, the choice of model of organisation is vital. As a registered charity, Bold Vision were able to offer their services to the campaigners who were working to ensure the continuation of the library service:

Because we were a registered charity then some money could be channelled through us, because we had funding already, supporters and volunteers then that made it easier for new projects to get started, things like having a bank account, having a health and safety policy, all those kind of trappings for running an organisation. For a new, grassroots project this is a real pain, they don't know where to start

Bold Vision already had a track record of running successful community projects, and this gave the council confidence to hand over the service to them. Their status as a charity also aided the fundraising activities. Interviewees told us that the choice of model of organisation opens different doors and shapes the progression of the organisation. By choosing to register as a charity, Bold Vision were able to inspire confidence in local agencies working with the campaigners to transfer assets.

Inspiration can be taken from a couple of our case studies (The Mill, Bold Vision) who were able to use their status, reputation and existing assets to provide a place and a space to incubate local project, to trial new ideas, to innovate, to occasionally fail and to ultimately spin-out some successful community services. They connect the needs of the local community with home-grown solutions:

We made a conscious decision that the solutions to local problems are found locally, and I would say don't expect the solution to be apparent straight away, but something usually comes

up, or someone comes up who has an interesting way of looking at things, and that might re-invigorate your project or bring a solution that you weren't expecting.

The Homebaked project has set up a community land trust as a vehicle for asset transfer of buildings with a clearance order on them under the housing market renewal initiative in Anfield, Liverpool. The community land trust is a not for profit organisation made up of local volunteers the aim of which is to provide affordable housing for local people. Community Land Trusts (CLTs) work collectively with local people and it is the intention that the building work will provide local young people with jobs and training. In the case of the Homebaked CLT, it has proved to be an open platform for community members to get involved.

The membership of the CLT itself is growing weekly, two years ago we would have never anticipated that firstly we would have so many people involved and secondly that they would have shown themselves capable of actually managing a community land trust and cooperative bakery.

Enterprising approaches are increasing

In a time of uncertainty in local services and more competition for grants and contracts, the case studies have had to remain agile in their approach to funding. And for some, this meant that their status as a Company Limited by Guarantee worked best for them:

We are a company limited by guarantee, we're not a registered charity, although we keep looking at it and deciding whether we should be or not. It seems to work for us, we keep going round in circles wondering if we should register as a charity, I'm not sure we should, we're a business and we're trading, so I'm not sure it's to our advantage, but we're getting advice just in case we've missed something.

Despite operating within very limited means, all of our case studies feel the need to take an enterprising approach and some even expressed seeing earned income as more reliable; for example through the hiring of space, activities and use of facilities.

We decided that we'd see how much we can make for ourselves and it turns out quite a lot, and it turns out it's more reliable than a local authority contract and it's much easier to spend because it's unrestricted, we like it that way, and we're going to try to make it at the heart of our business model, but we are applying for funding for particular projects.

Recommendations

The governance and type of organisational form to be used is a central decision for any community delivery of services. This can vary from flexible informal engagement with a wide range of local citizens

to a more structured format of a charity with a governing board, different organisational forms may suit different situations.

We recommend:

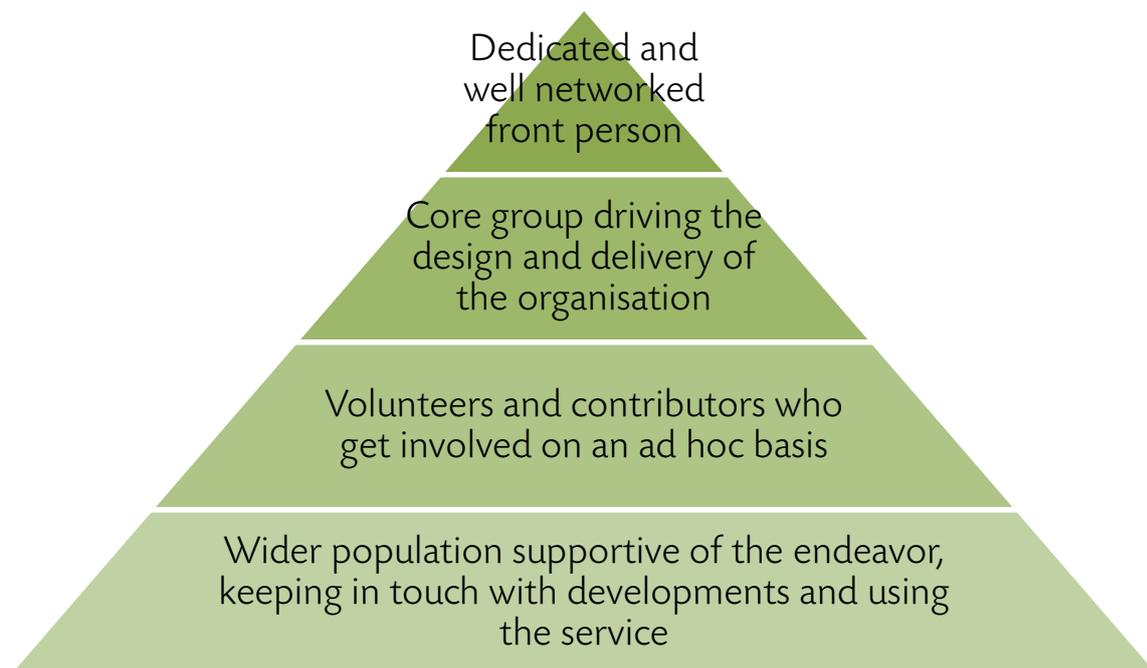
- Accessible information to be developed by experts with support of central government to enable individuals to find the best fit and understand the steps needed to register as a not-for profit organisation, for example a charity, mutual or Community Interest Company (CIC).
- Support for consortia development and models of joint ownership, such as direct training under the Cabinet Office Commercial Masterclasses
- Provide better links with the private sector, organisations should be clear on the support they need from businesses, including corporate volunteering

4. Leadership & partnerships

Service is often fronted by one well-networked member of the community

Despite being grounded in the community, the organisations that we worked with they are ultimately fronted by a dedicated individual who has strong values and the ability to connect people at the local level. Those individuals are usually supported by a core group of community members who are similar in their ambitions for the project to thrive.

Supporting this core group there are community members who get involved in the delivery and use of the service.



The front-person

The Community organisations represented in our case studies tend to rely on one person who manages the organisation, provides leadership and takes on a large burden of the work; this person is often personally motivated to lead the initiative due to a commitment to the local community where they live or a particular issue that is important to them.

I wanted to start in my neighbourhood and actually get to meet people, I was very aware from the news and that sort of thing and an interest in environmental issues that we need to do more about food sustainability. Actually, the very nature of doing the research and finding out more in itself led to other things.

This commitment often means that they will go over and above in their dedication to the community service.

As long as I could pay the rent, I'd work here for nothing if I had to, I'd go and sign on, I'd keep finding money, I'd look for jobs, the council didn't ask for money for the first three months until we'd established ourselves, but now we have to pay rent and rates.

Interviewees reported some difficulties in managing their work/life balance; often these individuals suffer from a lack of financial security and they may receive no pay, or even invest their own money in delivering the work.

We need a paid chief exec, I do it unpaid and I do it because I'm passionate about it, but it's not sustainable, funding for an executive role and a strategic role is going to be essential for the future.

Unless you've got somebody who's giving you funding on a plate, it very much relies on the good will of the person who's giving their time to set all these things up.

Some of our interviewees were even juggling work commitments on top of their commitment to the community group.

Financial security would be the one thing, if you're doing this then you're not doing something else, I'm very lucky that I do have another job that's paid by the hour, so that is what is paying my bills and that sort of thing, and when I talk about scaling things up, I wouldn't ask someone to work for free or set something up for free in another area, because I don't think that's fair or sustainable.

They often feel a lack of control over the pace of the work, often having to fit in with external timetables.

You have to fall in with other people's needs and wishes which adds an extra layer of stress, you have to fit in with all sorts of things which are really complex and you don't understand them, it's very very stressful doing this kind of work.

The issue of 'burn out' was a real concern for our interviewees, due to a combination of long working hours, lack of support or remuneration, and despite being a community venture, feeling the pressure of being the person driving the initiative, perhaps without a suitable substitute person with the time and the dedication to give to the project.

Community volunteers involved in delivery

Community led services are driven by people power, many have no paid staff at all but they manage to thrive through harnessing the talents and commitment of the wider community. Voluntary work plays a vital role in the delivery of these services, and enables the organisation to remain agile and low cost, and

the participation of community members in the delivery also adds legitimacy to the organisation's position as a community owned entity.

We made a conscious decision that the solutions to local problems are found locally. Don't expect the solution to be apparent straight away, but something usually comes up, or someone comes in who has an interesting way of looking at things, and that might re-invigorate your project or bring a solution that you weren't expecting.

All of our case studies relied heavily on volunteers and all had a diversity of ways to be involved in delivering the service from participation on the main management group, to daily roles such as reception, to professional support such as management or accounting. The organisations also operate with a bank of people who get involved on a more ad-hoc basis through, for example, helping with events or one off projects such as decorating or gardening.

They tend to be quite highly skilled. We also have a bank of volunteers that we can call on to say we need extra people for this event, or can you bake a cake? We have cake bakers for example who don't do anything else.

The interviewees suggested to us that they were able to obtain a wide range of skills and input into the service through the use of volunteers, none of the examples were short on time or good-will. However, when asked about gaps, they were mostly concerned with obtaining short term help to plug gaps in the skills set of the wider team, such as fundraising support or finance and administration.

We have almost no gaps in skills or expertise, there's nothing that I might want to know about that I can't find someone locally to tell me about, and often it's about cash.

Reliance on volunteers can often mean that these organisations are over-stretched, even if they have a strong skills-set within their bank of volunteers, the work can be difficult to manage as they are competing with a myriad of demands on volunteers' time:

Being a volunteer organisation is tough because people have other things they have to do; sometimes we miss opportunities because we can't fill in that funding form or attend that meeting.

We found that London and city-based community groups may find it easier to access specialist volunteering and pro-bono support, although an issue raised was around access to professional ad-hoc volunteers, and the difficulty with obtaining the right contribution at the right time:

Businesses often say 'we'd love to come along and do one big digging project' but we don't have many big projects, we tend to be absolutely fine for help when we're doing something like

plant an orchard, but it's more sort of the day to day things like dealing with all the emails that come in.

Managing others' perceptions is also important for an organisation that relies on volunteers. Even if they are running a successful service, they can experience not being taken seriously or seen as professional, one of our examples even found that being fronted by a volunteer meant that they were denied access to certain support

We wanted to apply for [...] a scheme that matches organisations with capacity building advice and support from business leaders, [...] we didn't qualify for any of [their requirements], but I went to their office and talked them into ignoring four of the criteria, but the one they wouldn't budge on was that they needed a full-time member of staff to liaise with, and at the time, that was me. I was a full time worker, and I had been for 18 months, so I could prove longevity and I could prove that I knew what I was doing but I didn't have a contract, and they weren't willing to take that as acceptable.

Community involved in decisions

All of our case studies incorporate a lot of community involvement in the day to day decision making of their organisation. For them, it is important to reflect the views of the wider community, it is vital to their position as a community service.

They all relied on a variety of ways to get the public involved, and provided different routes to involvement, from involvement more directly to support the day to day decisions such as participation on the board to more ad-hoc involvement and feedback on the service.

Working with local commissioners

In terms of external partnerships, for our case studies, their relationship with the local authority is often crucial to ensure transfer of an asset and ongoing delivery of key services. However it can also be a challenge, with difficulties in getting coordinated responses from the different agencies and departments.

The local authority relationship is important but it doesn't seem to quite add up, we have about 10 different connections with the local authority for various elements, none of which seem to talk to each other.

Think of a time and double it when you're working with strategic bodies, because they don't come back to you when you need them.

A lack of a coordinated response can lead to missed opportunities, the chair of North Deal Community Partnership gave a tangible illustration of this:

I was negotiating a couple of months ago with the environment agency. They've just done a big beach project and had a load of big rocks left over, and I asked them if they would give us some rocks to put into the play area, because the kids were saying they want some seating, so I ask the council for permission to put some rocks into the field and it took them about nine or ten weeks for them to answer the question, by which time the rocks were gone.

There can often be difficulties in timetables with local agencies

The working timetable of local agencies can also be a challenge for small community organisations heavily reliant on volunteers, and our participants told us that meetings are often held at short notice and during office hours which were sometimes unmanageable for project leaders who are often juggling day jobs and family lives. On the other hand many small organisations may operate on shorter timescales and therefore are restricted by delays in decision-making under longer local authority timetables.

Timely responses is a big challenge, don't expect things to happen when you need them. Because we don't own the land, we've had difficulty.

As we have seen, often these organisations have their roots in a community-led campaign and moving from an oppositional relationship to a cooperative one can also be a challenge for the relationship with the local authority, it can be difficult in establishing the trusting relationship and hand-over of responsibility required for activities and services to be taken on by the group.

Somebody said 'you can't go ahead and plant them; we'll only have to dig them up if they're in the wrong place'.

Despite the challenges, these organisations are often all about partnerships, connecting individuals, other community groups and harnessing support from local businesses. Their unique offer is often in being able to apply local intelligence to the tackling of local issues.

These partnerships are especially important in the start-up phase of the community initiative.

You obviously don't want people to feel like you're taking over the whole village with your crazy ideas, so I made sure that I met with all the existing groups.

Our examples also found innovative relationships with local businesses, such as a partnership with a local estate agent to grow on some disused land. There may furthermore be opportunities to unlock pro bono skills from local business to ensure capacity needs are met locally.

Recommendations

It's important to be flexible in the approach to involving local citizens and small community organisations, generally there is a need for plenty of notice and consider meetings outside of normal working hours

We recommend:

- Support for capability of community leaders in partnership working, particularly where organisations are volunteer-led, this should be delivered by relevant experts from civil society and may include individual mentoring
- Ensure sufficient time in commissioning for development of local community-led solutions
- Better governance and accountability in cross-sector partnerships; new local commissioners such as PCCs, CCGs and LEPs should encourage framework agreements to be put in place between partners in a transparent and accountable way.
- Local compacts should be promoted to set out good partnership working, and how voluntary organisations can contribute to the local decision making process